

Most Municipal Planning Grant (MPG) projects start with hiring a qualified consultant. Rules for consultant selection are detailed in Attachment D of your Grant Agreement – *Procurement Procedures*. These are designed to ensure that public funds are used to hire the most qualified people available. Here are answers to the most commonly asked questions about hiring expert assistance.

1. Is a competitive process required to select the consultant?

NO – You can skip the selection process and proceed directly to contracting if:

- Your Regional Planning Commission is the consultant
- Your project is part of a multi-stage project and the consultant will be continuing from a previous stage

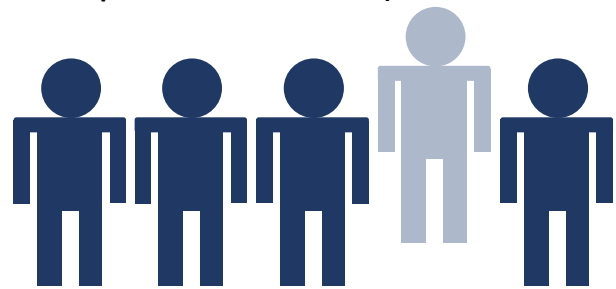
YES – You must follow the steps for competitive selection below for all other situations

Other exceptions and waiver provisions are detailed in the *Procurement Procedures*.

2. Do we always have to issue an RFP or RFQ (Request for Proposals or Qualifications)?

NO – If the total payment for the consultant will be \$1,000 or less you can just contact two or more consultants directly to obtain price quotes.

YES – If the total payment for the consultant selection will be more than \$1,000 then you need to issue a broadly publicized RFP or RFQ. Publication in a newspaper is not required but every effort should be made to reach out to as many qualified professionals working in Vermont as possible. DHCD maintains a Consultant Directory that can be used to contact consultants directly, but the list is not comprehensive so other avenues should be pursued as well.



In all situations, keep records in your files, documenting how the consultant selection decision was made. (This information is not required for MPG close-out but should be kept with the grant files for the possibility of a future audit.)

3. What is the difference between an RFP and an RFQ?

Simple templates for a [Request for Proposals \(RFP\)](#) and [Request for Qualifications \(RFQ\)](#) can be found on the MPG [Grant Administrators webpage](#) along with a [Directory of Planning Consultants](#).

The main difference between these two approaches for soliciting consultants is that an RFP requires the consultant to describe their approach to the project with a detailed scope of services, schedule and budget as part of their initial submission. The municipality reviews and compares the proposals and once the best candidate is selected, generally moves directly to contracting.

RFPs are preferred in these situations:

- When cost comparisons are a primary consideration in selection
- When the municipal group conducting the selection process does not have time for the steps in the RFQ process

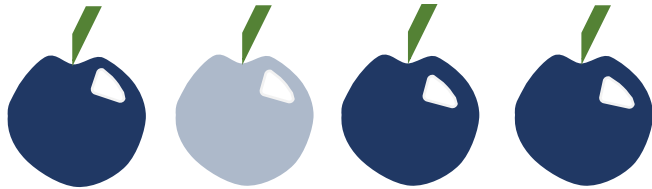
For an RFQ, the consultant submits a brief description of their approach to the project in a cover letter that accompanies information on their relevant qualifications. The municipality reviews the qualifications and selects a 'short list' of the 2-3 best qualified for interviews and asks only those on the short list to provide a detailed scope of services, schedule and budget. RFQs are preferred in these situations:

- When the amount available to pay the consultant is a lump sum that cannot be exceeded
- When there is a limited pool of consultants and the initial goal is to determine if any qualified consultants are interested in the work
- When negotiation on the work plan, schedule and budget are desirable prior to contracting

Preparing a full proposal can be time consuming and expensive for consultants so for the relatively small amounts of funding available through the MPGs we generally recommend that municipalities use the simpler and more flexible RFQ process rather than the RFP.

4. When the consultant is selected:

A [written contract](#) between the town and the consultant is required for all services costing more than \$1,000. For provisions to include in the contract, see the *Procurement Procedures*, Section II on *Personal Services Contracts* and Section VI on *Standard State Requirement of Bidders* for provisions to include in the contract.



Then get started! Remember that the best planning projects are those that involve not just experts but that actively engage the public and all local boards and commissions.

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